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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: PARLIAMENTARIAN SEES GROWING ROLE FOR  
LEGISLATURE

REF: A. ASTANA 1807  
[1](#)B. ASTANA 1183

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[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: On September 23, Parliamentarian Daria Klebanova spoke about the growing role of the Parliament and anticipated domestic violence legislation. Also an active journalist, she contradicted recent negative reports by civil society sources and termed the media climate "positive." At the same time, she highlighted financial challenges associated with media ownership and her fear of mounting Chinese influence in this realm. END SUMMARY.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION EXPECTED THIS YEAR

[1](#)3. (SBU) Daria Klebanova, member of the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Kazakhstan's Parliament) since 2004, described to PolEcon Chief on September 23 the growing importance of Parliament in Kazakhstan. Given its budgetary and legislative authority, she asserted that it plays a critical role in response to the economic crisis and in preparation for its 2010 Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). She claimed that Parliament must pass -- before the end of the year -- numerous laws to bring Kazakhstani legislation closer to the OSCE standards.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Klebanova expects the Parliament to adopt this year the long-anticipated law on domestic violence, which Klebanova considers a serious problem in Kazakhstan. She said that the legislation should clearly define the terminology, legal procedures, and punishments, fund "crisis centers," and add domestic violence experts to the police force. Klebanova highlighted her regret that Parliament would not likely pass this year another important law of the same package -- "On Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women." Klebanova underlined this bill's challenging nature, especially with respect to the establishment of quotas for female participation in politics. (NOTE: The Strategy for Gender Equality set a target quota of 40% women in government. Currently, 17 women and 90 men serve in the Mazhilis. END NOTE.)

[1](#)5. (SBU) Klebanova admitted that the Public Chamber, which was

established in the Mazhilis so that opposition political parties and civil society could voice their opinions on draft legislation, does not function effectively. She blames the opposition for its failure to utilize that opportunity to become involved in the legislative process. (NOTE: The opposition political parties have, admittedly, failed to take full advantage of the Public Chamber, but leading civil society activists who are Chamber members point to its shortcomings as reasons. Most importantly, the Chamber does not have the opportunity to review all legislation. END NOTE.)

"POSITIVE" MEDIA CLIMATE

¶6. (SBU) Klebanova, journalist and owner of the television company formerly known as "Rakhat," termed Kazakhstan's current media climate "positive." When asked about civil society concerns that media freedom is deteriorating (ref A), she deflected the question. In general, she asserted media responsibility and caution when publishing critical materials in order to avoid libel suits. On the Internet law (ref B), Klebanova called it pointless, because Internet users can circumvent blocked sites. During Parliamentary discussion of the law, she voiced this opinion, but voted for it due to her membership in the ruling Nur Otan political party. In her opinion, the government persisted in passing the Internet law, because it "sometimes needs to prove that it is 'the boss' and that it can, no matter what, have things go the way it wants."

¶7. (SBU) When the discussion turned to business questions, Klebanova became more animated, obviously preferring this non-controversial subject matter. She enumerated the financial challenges of owning a television station, including the high programming and satellite costs. Given the scarcity of commercial advertisements, she asserted that private media outlets only survive thanks to government contracts. Klebanova commended the government

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for its efforts to distribute contracts evenly among various media outlets. According to Klebanova, the government must support local media, because it otherwise risks a takeover by Russian and Chinese media. Given the high number of Russian speakers and proximity to Russia, Russian television programs are traditionally popular in Kazakhstan. In the northern parts of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstanis often have better access to Russian channels than to Kazakh ones. In contrast to her generally benign view of Russian media, she expressed concern over China's recently-launched Russian-language television company designed to cover Russia and Kazakhstan.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: The 46-year-old Klebanova is a journalist by training (and alum of a 1992 Voice of America training program) and still does weekly reviews of political and social events for her television station. Considered one of the liberal-leaning members of the Nur Otan party, she has, on occasion, publicly objected to controversial draft laws, such as the Internet law. However, Nur Otan party discipline is strong, and party members rarely register their reservations with a "nay" vote. END COMMENT.

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